

+++++ News Update - Urgent +++++  
6 October 1990

# LHASA, TIBET:

## Massive Police Presence to Deter Further Protests

A new series of demonstrations and poster campaigns by Tibetan nationalists in Lhasa has led to the Chinese saturating the city with troops during the last two weeks, according to detailed reports from the capital.

At least six Tibetans were arrested and beaten during a series of pro-independence demonstration in Lhasa in mid-September, according to the reports. The protests came as security on the city streets was relaxed for a few days, apparently to create a better impression for two foreign journalists invited to Tibet.

The demonstrations, which took place on 12, 14, and 15th September, were led by small groups of nuns and monks.

At about noon on Friday 14th September between ten and twelve nuns from Chubsang and Shuksep nunneries near Lhasa began to chant slogans as they walked around the north side of the Barkhor, the alleyway surrounding the Jokhang, the main temple in Lhasa. They were joined by two monks, one of whom was from Sera Monastery 3 km north of Lhasa, and were followed by a large crowd of onlookers.

They reached the south-east corner of the Barkhor - about 400 metres - before meeting a contingent of police. Six of the demonstrators were seized, including the monk from Sera, who was arrested at gun point.

The prisoners were held in the Police Station on the west side of the Barkhor for ten minutes before being driven away in police jeeps. Witnesses who saw them put into the vehicles said that the six had been beaten whilst in the police station.

The two other incidents are said to have finished after a few minutes when police arrived. Approximately 15 nuns are believed to have taken part in the incident on 12th September in the Barkhor. Two or three nuns staged a similar incident on Saturday 15th September. The protesters are reported to have disappeared into side streets as police approached.

Many demonstrations since 1987 in Lhasa have been initiated by nuns, and in April 1990 up to 300 women were expelled from nunneries near Lhasa and sent back to their home villages following political investigations.

- 2,500 Armed Police Parade through Streets -

Witnesses in Lhasa say there were massive displays of police manpower in the days after the demonstrations, which led up to 27th September, anniversary of the outbreak of pro-independence demonstrations in 1987.

On 22nd September at around 11 a.m. eighty-five truckloads of People's Armed Police drove through the city. Most of the troops were armed with AK-47s, and others had rifles with fixed bayonets. Ten of the trucks contained officers only, according to witnesses. Two newly equipped special armoured riot vehicles were also displayed, with machine guns fixed on the roof.

The procession was led by a van advertising the Asian Games and displaying the Panda symbol, mascot of the Games, which opened in Beijing, 1500 miles away, on the same day. The total manpower was estimated as "at least 2,500" by witnesses, who described the parade as an attempt to intimidate Tibetans despite the token panda presence.

- September 27th: jets buzz Lhasa -

There are no reports of demonstrations on September 27th or October 1st, but details have emerged of heavy police presence on both days. On September 27th patrols, each up to 60 strong, marched in both directions around the Barkhor. At the same time police stood guard in groups of two to three every 40-50 metres along the circular pilgrimage path as well as along Dekyi Lam, the main shopping street in the Tibetan quarter of Lhasa. The police, mainly in the uniform of the People's Armed Police, were all said to be wearing helmets and armed, and equipped with radios.

A special police force appointed to deal with commercial activities was reported to have been active in previous days instructing stall holders in the area to keep their shops and stalls open during the 27th September. Shopkeepers have staged boycotts on several similar occasions. In the event only a few shops, mainly Government-run establishments opened on September 27th.

Witnesses said that during the previous night of September 26th-27th "well-armed patrols", each consisting of up to 20 police, hid in alleyways leading onto the Barkhor or crouched behind deserted market stalls, apparently in the hope of catching dissidents putting up political posters on the walls.

The authorities may have been disturbed by a massive poster scare the previous week, when up to 300 pro-independence handbills were stuck on walls around the Barkhor or scattered on the streets. The posters promised

demonstrations against Chinese rule. Locals are said to have described the poster campaign by nationalists as a ploy to scare the Chinese and to show them the continuing strength of underground resistance groups.

In an unusual move, fighter jets made low passes over the city on two occasions during the day. One tourist in Lhasa described the new Chinese strategy as "Migs versus nuns".

On October 1st foot patrols varied in size from 8 to 50 men, marching in both directions around the Barkhor and along Dekyi Lam, carrying riot shields and electric batons. Armed Police stayed mainly in small groups at key points around the area, and small squads were positioned approximately every 50 metres. Tour groups were directed away from the area, and the remaining 45 individual tourists advised not to go to the Barkhor. The Jokhang Temple was closed for the day and monks there are reported to be banned from leaving the building for the entire period covering the two anniversaries.

Checkpoints were set up on all roads leading into Lhasa, with in one case three successive checkpoints on one road. Monks and nuns from outside the capital are reported not to have been allowed into the city.

- Security kept low-key during journalists' visit -

Commentators in Lhasa say that police patrols around the Barkhor were kept to a minimum during the week beginning 9th September. They attributed this to the presence in Lhasa of two foreign journalists, Nicholas Kristoff of the New York Times and Kazuyashi Nishikawa of Japan's Kyodo News Service, believed to be the first pressmen officially allowed into Tibet since martial law was lifted on May 1st 1990.

High-profile police presence resumed hours after the correspondents left the city early on the morning of 16th September. At 9.30 a.m. that morning the People's Armed Police staged a massive parade of up to 38 troop trucks through the centre of Lhasa.

Foot patrols varying in strength from 12 to 24 Armed Police equipped with riot helmets and clubs recommenced patrols around the Barkhor soon after. Armed Police also began patrols along Dekyi Lam (Beijing Lu), marching in single-file, with 8 men in each patrol.

On Saturday 8th September, the day before the journalists arrived, Lhasa Tibetans were given an implicit warning not to demonstrate by the biggest display of armoured power seen in Lhasa since March. Up to 12 tanks drove in procession through the streets of the capital, according to Tibetan sources in Lhasa.

During the tense period surrounding the potential flashpoints of September 27th and October 1st police have made sporadic attempts to prevent foreign tourists from spreading news about conditions in the city. Police policy has been erratic, with some foreigners held under detention outside Lhasa, and others allowed to stay in the city.

On 18th September up to 15 tourists were held under armed police guard, some for over 10 days, at Gongkar airport, 50 km from Lhasa, when local police said that they should not have bought tickets for the flight to Lhasa from Chengdu, in China's western province of Sichuan. The tourists were allowed to visit local villages but not to enter the capital.

Two American tourists and later 5 other westerners escaped and managed to join the 80 individual tourists already in Lhasa. They were not pursued.

According to other reports, some individual tourists in Lhasa have been told they cannot leave the city until after 10th October, or that they must avoid the Barkhor on certain days. These orders were not enforced. According to several reports the authorities planned to expel all individual tourists before 22nd September but later abandoned the scheme when they realised that over 70 had already been allowed into the city.

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